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Samora Moïsés MACHEL
(Phonetic: maSHEL)

MOZAMBIQUE

President
(since June 1975)

Addressed as:
Mr. President

President of the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) since 1970, Samora Machel directed his country's liberation struggle and has been Mozambique's only president since independence. Mozambique—large (twice the size of California), drought stricken, and underdeveloped—is currently beset by a poor economy and an ongoing insurgency that infests most of the country. In an effort to reduce tensions in the region, Machel concluded a nonaggression pact called the Nkomati Accord with South Africa in March 1984. He regularly discusses regional issues with other African leaders.

After attending a mission school in Mozambique in the late 1950s, Machel worked in a hospital and took nursing classes at night. He joined FRELIMO in 1963 and subsequently received nine months of guerrilla training in Algeria. He then went to Tanzania to train 250 guerrillas, whom he later led in the initial attack against the Portuguese Government in his homeland in 1964. The following year Machel assumed responsibility for FRELIMO military training in Tanzania, and by 1966 he had become chief of guerrilla operations—a post he held until the end of the war in 1974. He did not participate directly in the transition government that oversaw Portuguese withdrawal from Mozambique from September 1974 until June 1975. Instead, from FRELIMO headquarters in Tanzania, he laid the plans for his country's first independent government and returned to Mozambique only the day before his inauguration as President. Currently, in addition to his other duties, he is Commander in Chief of the Mozambican Armed Forces. He holds the military rank of marshal.

Machel, 51, speaks Portuguese and several tribal languages. Married, he has eight children. His wife, Graça, is Minister of Education and Culture.

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